

JUNE 2009 PRESS RELEASES

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Investigators Announce Cause of May 20 Madison Courthouse Fire

During the late afternoon of May 20, a major structure fire occurred at the Jefferson County Courthouse in downtown Madison. After firefighters extinguished the blaze, investigators from the private sector, the City of Madison Fire Department, the Indiana State Fire Marshal's Office, which is part of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and Explosives have resolved the cause of the fire.

There has been a great spirit of cooperation among the investigating agencies. All have a very close working relationship, and this coordination was critical to reach this conclusion.

It is the determination of these investigators that this fire was accidental in its origin.

The courthouse was in the finishing stages of an extensive remodeling program. One of the final aspects of that remodeling included repair and replacement of copper downspouts and gutters from the upper reaches of the building. A contractor was soldering two pieces together that afternoon and accidentally started a fire in the wooden sections of the building's roof.

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Fire Safe Cigarettes Mandate Takes Effect July 1

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana smokers may notice some small changes in the cigarettes they purchase beginning July 1. Fire safe cigarettes have a reduced propensity to burn when left unattended, and have proven to decrease the number of home fires.

Fire safe cigarettes place two bands on the cigarette paper that are less porous than the surrounding paper. These bands require smokers to inhale at these bands to increase oxygen and increase the temperature of the burning cigarette paper enough to burn

through the bands.

“The cigarettes are made from the same blend of tobacco as regular cigarettes,” said Jim Greeson, Indiana State Fire Marshal and Indiana Department of Homeland Security Division of Fire and Building Safety Director. “The only difference to the consumer is they need to puff it more often or re-light it.”

Traditional technology keeps a cigarette burning even without puffing. This is accomplished by including a significant amount of citrate-burning agents. Within 10 minutes, 90-100 percent of traditional cigarettes will cause fires in ignition tests – and a cigarette can smolder for up to 45 minutes.

“The only physical packaging difference is that fire safety packs are denoted with a small “FSC” printed under the bar code, a heavy black line above the UPC, a diamond symbol or the letters FS, LIP, or RIP,” added Greeson.

Statistics on residential structure fires through the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) show that 138 reported smoking related fires occurred in Indiana in 2008. These fires caused four civilian deaths, and 11 civilian injuries with property loss at nearly \$3.4 million. According to the National Fire Protection Agency, cigarette-ignited fires are the leading cause of home fire deaths in the United States, killing 700-900 people annually.

For more information on fire safe cigarettes, visit www.in.gov/dhs/firesafesmokes.htm.

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